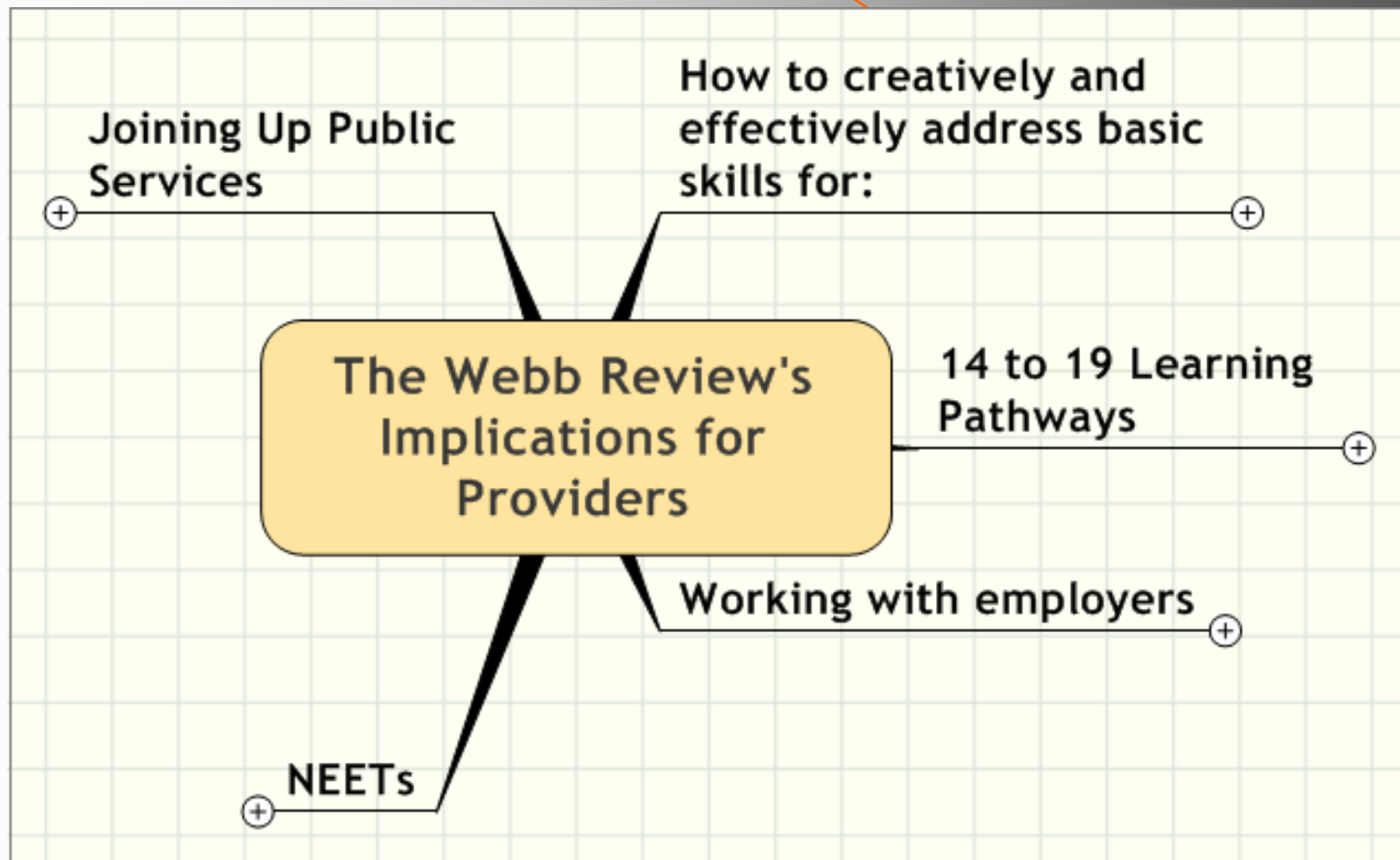


# The Webb Review's Implications for Providers

Andrew Cooksley  
Managing Director  
ACT Group

# The Webb Review's Implications for Providers



# I. Addressing Basic Skills

- Two distinct areas:
  - Addressing the basic skills needs of the unemployed and economically inactive
  - Addressing the basic skills needs of individuals in employment

# The Unemployed & Economically Inactive

- Work Based Learning, particularly Skill Build prioritises 16 to 18 year olds.
- Very limited adult Skill Build provision for the economically inactive and unemployed get the skills they need to secure and maintain sustainable employment including basic skills
- Job Centre Plus programmes are short, sharp interventions focused on employment that do not address basic skills

# The Unemployed & Economically Inactive

- The problem of economically inactivity in Wales is dragging down GDP
- However, the drive to get them into short term employment is failing these multiply disadvantaged individuals and the communities they live in

# The Unemployed & Economically Inactive

- There needs to be a massive expansion of the Skill Build for Adults programme and a similar 'Guarantee' for quality training established as is the case for young people aged 16 to 18.
- Budgets need to be refocused on supporting those with greatest need and having the greatest impact on Wales' economy rather than to subsidise the most able

# The Unemployed & Economically Inactive

- Job Centre Plus programmes are primarily concerned with getting employment
- Many of the 'hardcore unemployed and economically inactive now left require more than quick fixes to get them into short term, low paid and dead end work

# The Unemployed & Economically Inactive

- Multiple disadvantage requires a holistic combined approach to address:
  - Basic skills
  - Confidence and motivational training
  - Work preparation
  - Essential skills for the workplace including Key Skills
  - Vocational training, skills and recognisable qualifications
  - Work experience

# The Unemployed & Economically Inactive

- Adult Skill Build provision should be dovetailed into Job Centre Plus programmes like New Deal to:
  - Support individuals after they have secured jobs via Welfare to Work programmes to address basic skills and to raise vocational skill levels
  - Prepare and then progress job ready people into employment support Welfare to Work programmes

# The Unemployed & Economically Inactive

- Skills budgets from the Welsh Assembly need to be refocused on supporting those with greatest need and that are having the targets negative impact on the economy of Wales
- Welfare to Work must ‘dovetail’ into the skills agenda and not operate in a vacuum of job targets
- Convergence Funds for the unemployed must also complement the skills programmes not undermine them

# Basic Skills for the Employed

- Funding should also be re-prioritised to engage those in work with basic skills needs
- Greater emphasis should be placed on the welcomed new Pre-Apprenticeship Programme and ensure it is given time to get established
- New Deal and other Welfare to Work programmes should be referring into the Pre-Apprenticeship programme as a 'Guarantee' to address poor basic skills

# Basic Skills for the Employed

- Raising skill levels at the higher end must continue. However, Wales cannot afford to have an either/or approach to skills development that has so often happened in the past
- All individuals in the workforce must have equal access to skill development whether they are entry level or require skills at levels 1,2, 3 or 4+

## 2. 14 to 19 Learning Pathways

### The Issues:

- How can Work Based Learning providers become equal and valued strategic partners in delivering vocational education for 14 to 16 year olds?
- The expertise and employer networks that WBL providers have are largely ignored
- The 14-19 Networks are currently largely dominated by schools and FE colleges

# 14 to 19 Learning Pathways

- The Webb report acknowledges the 'collaborative approach' required for the 14 to 19 agenda
- But it also highlights the continued 'high level of unhelpful competition' between schools and colleges
- WBL is not even really on the playing field yet

# 14 to 19 Learning Pathways

- It is nearly 10 years after ETAG and ETAP that established:
  - ELWa
  - CCETs
- What has changed?
- It has failed to get rid of 'nugatory competition'

# 14 to 19 Learning Pathways

Schools, FE and ACL although having gone through some change they have not been subject to the constant upheavals faced by WBL providers including:

- 2 competitive tendering rounds
- Constant and virtual annual changes in the funding methodology
- Stop/start approaches to what is delivered
- Fundamental changes in the programmes being delivered
- A year on year change of the network due to companies going out of business
- Restructuring of the network loss of provision and new providers
- Constant uncertainty and lack of strategic direction (ELWa/DCELLS)

# How can WBL providers can raise their profile to secure parity with schools and colleges?

- Continue to improve quality
- Responsiveness
- Marketing to Local Area Networks to raise awareness of what WBL expertise can offer 14 to 16 year olds

## 3. Working With Employers

- The Webb report acknowledges the extent of engagement that WBL providers have with employers
- However vast amounts of funding in the past have been routed through other organisations such as FE colleges and Higher Education institutions via programmes like KEF (Knowledge Exploitation Fund).

# Working with employers

- KEF gave Further Education & Higher Education institutions huge competitive advantages over WBL providers and ignored the WBL employer networks
- This is not 'joined up thinking'
- FE, HE and WBL should be collaboratively working to benefit employers and the wider economy across Wales

# Working with employers

- New employer programmes such as:
  - Workforce Development Accounts
  - Employer Entitlement Fund
  - Further Education Institutions Services to Employers Funds
  - Should be developed and implemented including the WBL network
  - those developed using Convergence funding must include WBL providers as well to better engage employers for any future KEF type programmes

# Working with employers

- Also any new KEF type programmes developed using Convergence funding must include WBL providers to engage more employers to ensure the Welsh workforce is getting skilled in sufficient numbers to the levels required for us to compete in a world market
- Ignoring the WBL network in such initiatives is like tying one hand behind our backs in progressing the skills agenda in Wales

# Working with employers

The statement in the Webb Review that:

- Further Education institutions must become the 'recognised skills driver' is of concern
- Further Education institutions , in the spirit of collaboration should be working with WBL providers to develop seamless provision for employers

## 4. NEET

- WBL providers, especially those delivering Skill Build should be strategically used to work with 14 to 16 year olds in a preventative strategy rather than as what currently happens as a 'sticking plaster' after the event i.e. post-16.

- Young people failing in mainstream education can be identified at an early age
- More needs to be done to strategically within the 14-16 age group to build upon expertise within WBL to support potential NEETs before they leave mainstream education
- Too many young people opt out of statutory school based education when WBL type programmes could be better used to address their needs

- Too many new initiatives blur the issue and ignore what already exists that can engage and provide relevant skills, training and qualifications for young people via the WBL network
- The problem is that we are not using the Skill Build provision and network strategically within Wales to get a long term sustainable strategy in place to tackle this on-going problem

- Skill Build and WBL in general requires a national champion to stimulate more strategic use of these programmes to tackle NEET issues both post-16 and in a preventive approach with 14-16 year olds

## 5. Joining Up Public Services

- Many of the issues raised relate directly back to a lack of 'joined-up public services'
- WBL is publicly funded and should be included in the 'joining-up' of public services. Too often it has been marginalized with the introductions of new 'sexy' initiatives

# Joining Up Public Services

- WBL has often been referred to in strategic documents as being part of wider strategies i.e.
  - Welfare to Work programmes like New Deal, Want to Work, Pathways
  - The 14 to 19 Learning Pathways
  - Communities First
- However, in reality this is largely not the case

# Joining Up Public Services

- Strategies and programmes are developed strategically but too often they are implemented in silos adding to duplication and waste of desperately needed public resources
- WBL must now start to be seen as a strategic programme properly integrated with economic and social strategies in Wales
- The Webb report must be welcomed as it is the first time that this 'strategic' role has really been recognised.

# Joining Up Public Services

- The challenge now is how WBL can rise to the challenges in the Webb review and how WBL providers can become key players in the challenge of making Wales an educated and well trained population

## 6. Reducing Bureaucracy

- This is a fundamental reform that must be addressed at the earliest possible opportunity within WBL
- The growth of paperwork alone within WBL has dramatically impacted upon the amount of actual resources available to learners

# The bureaucracy in WBL has not made any contribution to improving quality or efficiency

- It has produced a paper mountain within every WBL organisation operating in Wales when we should be focusing on efficiency, effectiveness as well as looking after the environment
- It would not be accepted within any other industry
- It is wasteful and drains resources that should be focused upon developing world class skills

**Any Questions?**